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# The Landworkers' Alliance
# Forestry Manifesto

Land Workers' Alliance
landworkersalliance.org.uk

**A time of crisis is also a time of opportunity.**

**The UK's current and future woodlands represent an opportunity for regeneration.**

# Contents

# Introduction

The Landworkers' Alliance (LWA) envisions big changes in the way we manage woods and trees. We see the possibility for them to provide benefits for people, wildlife and the climate at the same time, if we plan and invest and manage them correctly. This is the triple win win win - if we have the boldness to make it happen.

Forests are ecosystems, but not ones devoid of people. They have evolved with people over thousands of years, and some of our most wonderful ecology is the direct result of sensitive human management. For forests to again reach their potential, we need to integrate people again; and that means a diverse range of people as well. Social inclusion must be more than an afterthought.

The developing climate crisis has led to lots of talk about tree planting – which the LWA wholeheartedly supports. To ensure that tree-planting benefits local communities, and wildlife, and helps us meet our international obligations, we need a coherent national strategy and a revitalised Forestry Commission to deliver it.

We will need to sustainably manage a lot more of our existing woods, as well as plant many more forests. Alongside this, we need to integrate trees into agroecological farming systems, so that we expand and look after our hedgerows, provide more tree crops like nuts and fruit, and expand agroforestry systems.

The increasing threat of tree disease must be met with proper resources to investigate causes and solutions. We must prioritise a sustainable UK supply of healthy young trees and a network of local tree nurseries. Alongside this, we need to see woodland and forest knowledge reintegrated into our education and college system to stimulate a new wave of skilled workers.

It starts with education, but across the industry we need to see a move towards the UK becoming self-sufficient in timber products. This will require a host of policy changes and serious investment, but will have huge benefits for revitalised local economies, wildlife and public health, and will pay for itself in the long-term.

There is growing recognition of the many health benefits of spending time in nature. From air quality improvements, to the uplifting sounds of birdsong, to a climbing frame for children, trees can provide so much. People want to spend time in forests and they want local woodland products too.

For change to happen, government has to set out a strong direction and make major adjustments to planning policy, land-use strategy, economic investment, and sustainable business incubation. This manifesto sets out some of the detail.

# The Landworkers' Alliance Vision

Our planet, its people and its forests are in crisis. Around the world, forests and woodlands and the biodiversity they support are threatened by land clearance, urban development, pests and diseases, and the rapidly accelerating impacts of climate change. Annually, 19 million acres of forests are lost.

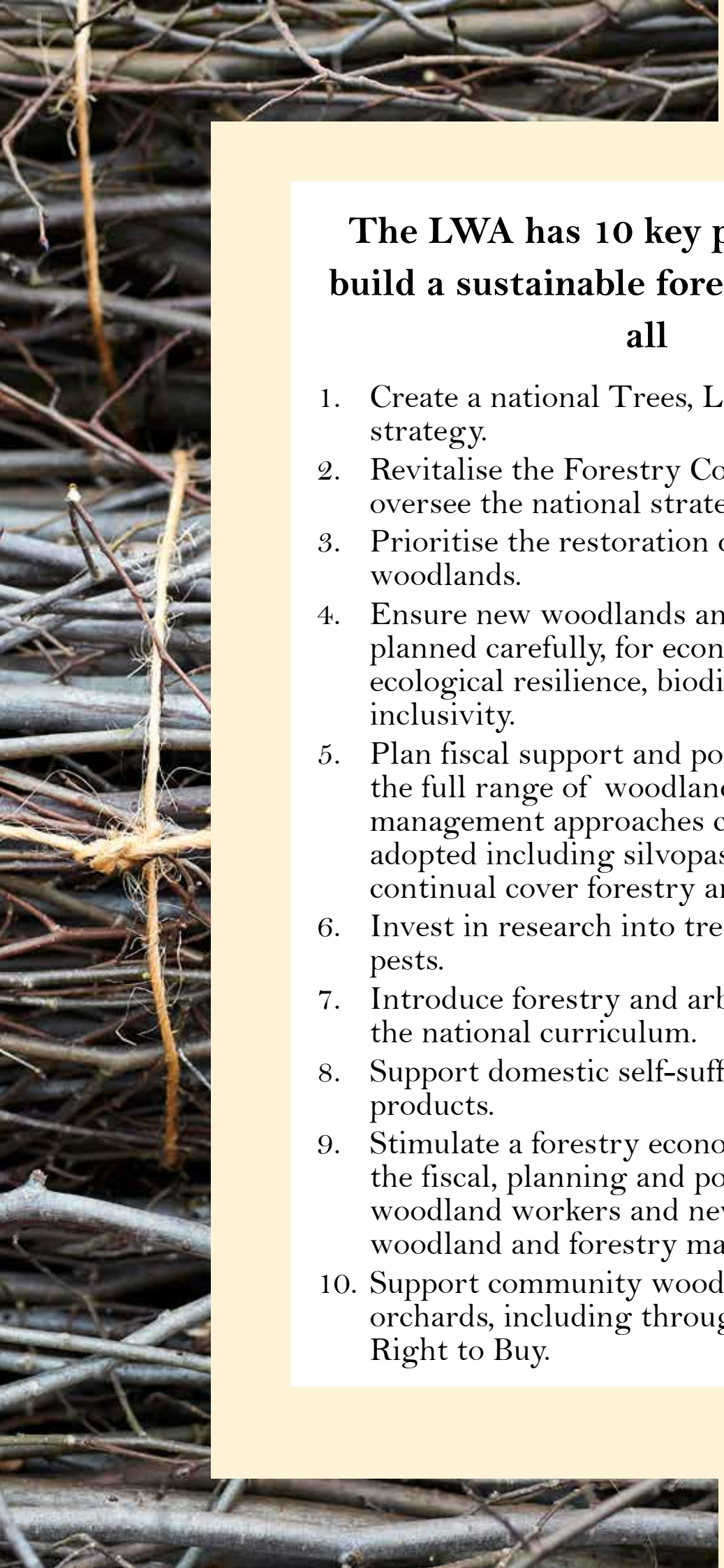
Our forestry institutions are underfunded, lack quality technical staff and remain unclear of their remit, or long-term security. These institutional and governance barriers have led to a highly stagnated institutional environment that fails to deliver the sectoral support that our people, land, trees and forests so urgently need.

The Landworkers' Alliance's vision is of diverse and resilient, well-managed, multi-purpose forests. Our forests will deliver a range of services without compromising the ability to yield good quality timber. We will encourage activities that contribute to good health and wellbeing, support employment and enterprise and provide places to develop skills and learn about the natural environment

The Landworkers' Alliance wants a sustainable revolution in the way we manage and grow trees with benefits for people and nature, so that trees, forests and woodlands can play their part in creating a sustainable future. With good planning and investment, the UK's forests can address the climate challenge, restore nature, and boost UK employment and rural regeneration. A triple win-win-win.

Forest Europe defines sustainable forest management as:

"The stewardship and use of forests and forest lands in a way, and at a rate, that maintains their biodiversity, productivity, regeneration capacity, vitality and their potential to fulfil, now and in the future, relevant ecological, economic and social functions, at local, national, and global levels, and that does not cause damage to other ecosystems ."



## The LWA has 10 key policy asks to build a sustainable forestry future for all

1. Create a national Trees, Land and People strategy.
2. Revitalise the Forestry Commission to oversee the national strategy.
3. Prioritise the restoration of existing woodlands.
4. Ensure new woodlands and forests are planned carefully, for economic and ecological resilience, biodiversity and social inclusivity.
5. Plan fiscal support and policy so that the full range of woodland and forestry management approaches can be widely adopted including silvopasture, silvoarable, continual cover forestry and agroforestry.
6. Invest in research into tree disease and pests.
7. Introduce forestry and arboriculture into the national curriculum.
8. Support domestic self-sufficiency in forestry products.
9. Stimulate a forestry economy and recognise the fiscal, planning and policy needs of woodland workers and new entrants to woodland and forestry management.
10. Support community woodlands and orchards, including through Community Right to Buy.

# Trees, Land and People - the current situation.

The UK is the second largest net timber importer in the world, second to China; we import 80% of the wood we consume and we've yet to reach peak timber consumption. The UK is also one of the least forested countries, with only 13% woodland cover compared with the global average of 31% and a European average of 38%. This compromises our ability to provide critical ecosystem services.

Crucially, the UK's woodland economy is unsustainable, with limited woodland, forestry and timber manufacturing opportunities. Despite generating £4.1bn from the 54% of the UK's woodlands which are actively managed, and despite the English government's commitment to plant 11 million trees in the next 25 years, the forestry sector is largely unsupported and is under-represented. UK governments are spending less than £1 per person per year on trees . This compares with over £50 per person per year paid out in payments to farmers.

Many conservation and amenity woodlands suffer from neglect and poor management leading to low productivity, including low grade timber and other forest products. Conversely commercial plantations often exist as biodiversity-poor habitats, and suffer land degradation when harvested. With the right incentives and policy frameworks this divide can be overcome.

Grants currently favour large landowners and forest agents, and tax breaks benefit the wealthy resulting in fewer quality trees being planted and grown, and missed opportunities for a thriving forestry economy and meaningful public involvement in our woodlands. Grant allocation has also been a barrier to the incorporation of trees into farming systems with farm support payments restricting eligibility on land with trees . The current grant system has also missed opportunities to support better and more efficient hedgerow management and to harness the public's interest in community orchards and tree planting.

# Diverse Productive Woodlands

Forest and woodlands are complex ecosystems with diverse habitats. The LWA recognises diversity in its many forms, including diverse approaches to forest and woodland management. It's this diversity, coupled with inclusion, that provides a mosaic of multiple economic, educational and cultural opportunities.

Diversity requires recognising different forest and woodland types, and recognising different management approaches including for hedgerow, orchards, plantations and broadleaved woodland. Preservation, conservation and improvement of habitats and biodiversity is key, but a sustainable approach to woodland and forest management must include practices which meet multiple interconnected needs. Woodlands and forests have a crucial role to play in climate change mitigation and adaptation, flood prevention, enhancing biodiversity, growing timber for future generations, providing livelihoods, and in the provision of health and wellbeing as well as in empowering communities.

Diversity also means increasing the inclusivity of people involved in forest systems; there is a need to ensure opportunities for access, employment and training are available to all sections of society. The LWA prioritises the active, productive management of land and woodlands in order to provide the resources and opportunities society needs, alongside ecological benefits.

**For a truly sustainable forestry sector we must remove the historic and artificial separation between conservation woodlands and commercial plantations.**

# A National Strategy

**Government has made big commitments to tree planting. To make use of this opportunity to reforest the UK, we believe the government needs a national strategy overseen by the Forestry Commission which is truly connected to local communities.**

The LWA proposes a national strategy informed by scientific, policy and forestry practitioners, and the people and communities who can live, work and thrive in a new tree economy. We believe a national strategy needs to:

- Include environmental, economic and social goals; build the resilience and diversity of our woodland economy; increase the percentage of woodland under active management; significantly increase both woodland coverage and domestic timber production; and ensure that woodland is managed with a diverse mosaic of different types of management systems.
- Ensure new woodland is not established on ecologically sensitive sites or on prime agricultural land.
- Address land access, tenancy rights, and planning constraints – as well as funding issues.
- Address the needs of woodland workers.
- Provide funding for research and trials into identifying species and forestry methods that increase resilience to climate change and pests and diseases.
- Make the case for forestry and arboriculture to be integrated into education at all stages.
- Have a plan to ensure equality of opportunities in the forestry sector which currently has very little gender, age, and ethnic diversity.
- Make the case for grants and subsidies for sustainable woodland management and to incentivise the consumption of domestic woodland and timber products.

# Net Zero, Carbon, and Trees

'Net zero' is shorthand for a situation where a countries' output or emissions of Greenhouse Gases (GHG) is equal to its ability to soak up those emissions, usually measured over a period of a year. If we are to achieve that goal, which of course we must , then firstly we have to stop burning fossil fuels – with all that entails for our economy and lifestyles, but there will be some emissions that remain from natural processes and economic activities.

To sequester those emissions we have to make use of the miracle of photosynthesis, where plants absorb carbon dioxide to grow and then store carbon in soils, organic matter, and with trees, in their wood. The fastest way to absorb that carbon over the long term using the UK landmass is through trees – which is why the LWA supports the call for a big increase in tree-planting and re-afforestation, in ways outlined in this document.

The UK currently has around 3.2 million hectares (Mha) of forest. This forest cover is currently sequestering 15-20 million tonnes per year (Mt /yr), which is about 5 tonnes per hectare per year (t/ha/yr).[1] The peak $CO_2$ uptake in UK forests is between 5 and 20 t/ha/yr.

But forests grow at very different rates according to age, soil, species and ecology, and wont always be at peak sequestration levels. Other factors (e.g. soil reaching 'saturation' point where it cant soak up any more carbon, or timber being burnt later) can obviously make a huge impact on the final figures. The chemistry and ecology is so complex, and our baseline research so poor that it is hard to give precise figures. We desperately need a huge expansion of research in this area, to get UK specific data .

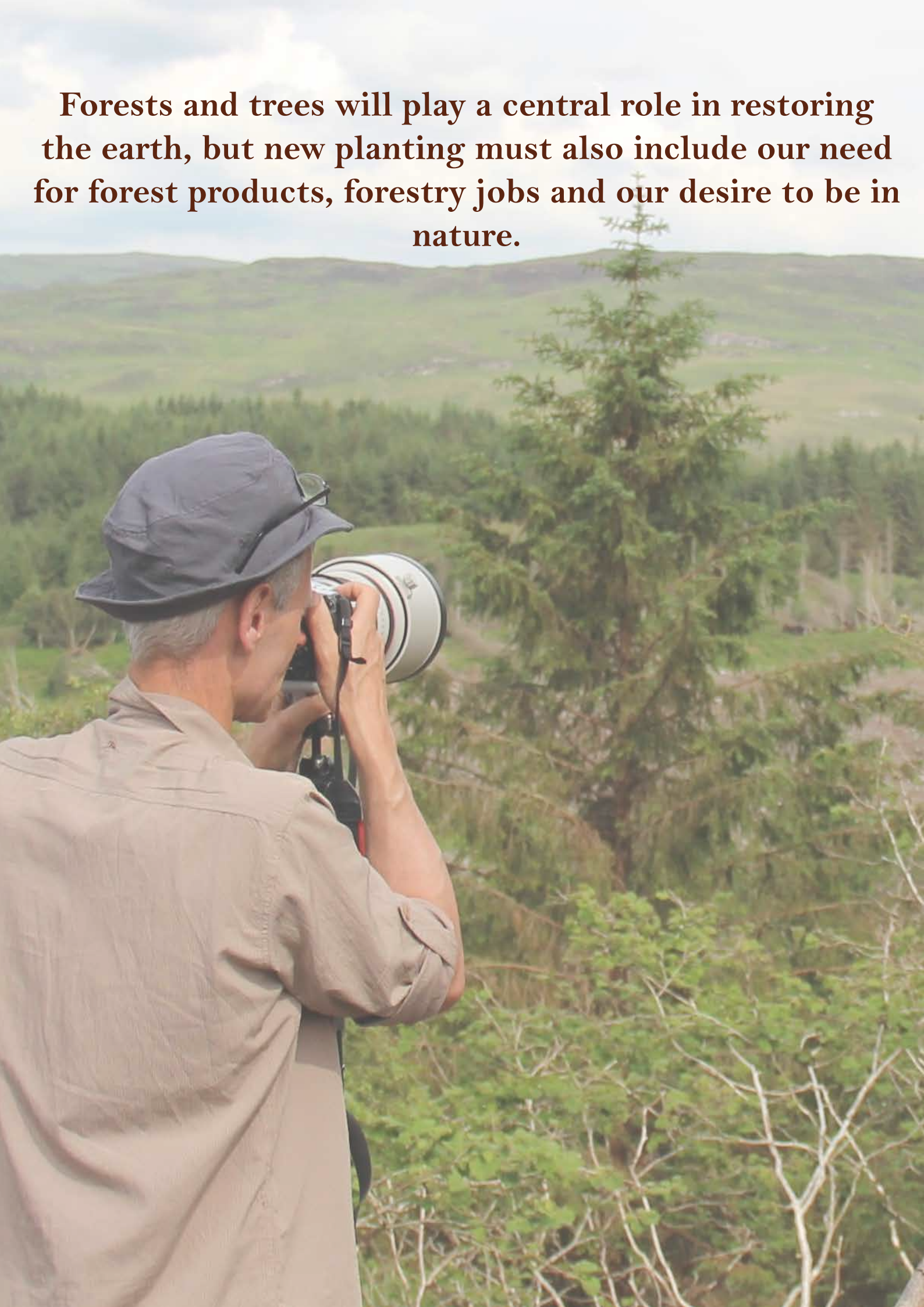
However, if we aimed for 7.2 million hectares of trees in ten years, an expansion of 4 Mha, we could estimate an annual sequestration rate of 36Mt. That figure could go a long way to meeting a net zero goal, but of course the exact target figure depends on how much we're emitting.

These new wooded areas should not be all monoculture plantations, but would be a diverse mix of expanded and new 'native' mixed woodlands, agroforestry systems, orchards, silvopasture, shelterbelts, plantations for specific timber or productive purposes and so on.

However it is done, it will need rapid establishment – as the climate crisis is immediate and urgent- good management and appropriate harvesting. It will be a big effort but in practice would mean about 5000 people planting about 200 trees each, per day, over the next ten years.

The investment costs will be far less than the costs of adapting to the climate crisis and will also have huge benefits for local economies and community.

1. Morison J, Understanding carbon and greenhouse gas balance in Britain's Forests 2012



**Forests and trees will play a central role in restoring the earth, but new planting must also include our need for forest products, forestry jobs and our desire to be in nature.**

# Growing Environmental Resilience

**Forests and trees will play a central role in our transition to net zero carbon emissions, in restoring the health of our ecosystems, and building environmental resilience. Woodland coverage needs to increase significantly, but new planting must be planned carefully, for economic and ecological resilience, biodiversity and social inclusivity. Support must also facilitate a dramatic increase in the percentage of existing woodlands that are actively managed, enabling a diversity of management systems, and a boost for local economies. Climate and environmental policy also needs to include planting hedgerows, trees in urban areas, and orchards.**

Government, at all levels and in all regions should ensure that:

- National tree and forest plans are integrated with climate policy. Trees and woodlands offer a key role in sequestering the GHG emissions that we can't avoid creating, and we will need many millions of new trees. The exact number depends on many factors; 4 million new hectares across the UK is a reasonable target.
- Tree-planting here - or abroad and counted as 'offsets' - is not used as a means to allow the continued emission of GHG. In order to avoid breaching our carbon allowance and stop global heating, the burning of fossil fuels must stop.
- Finance for new woods and trees is contingent on careful consideration of where new woodlands are to be planted, how the woodland will be managed, and, on the mix of tree species and planting densities. Climate change, and new and increased numbers of pests are contributing to increased shocks and stresses to woodlands and there is an urgent need to build resilience through diversity of species, planting and management systems.
- Incentives are given for woodlands that prioritise species diversity, the protection of threatened habitats and species, and that sequester carbon. A diversified woodland landscape has greater resilience for the longer term.
- When developing grants, a wide range of working woodland professionals are consulted on the design and management of new grant systems, and that any grant system is easy to use. The present grant system is not fit for purpose, due to the complexity for the application process and prescriptions.

- Where appropriate, the use of continuous forestry cover systems of management are promoted, to allow species mixes, and to create resilient species and age diverse woodlands in place of clear-fell, monoculture plantations.
- Where tree species replacement is beneficial, ensure individual Forestry Management Plans (FMPs) set out the timescale for that transition, support small coupes with diverse age structures, leave edges for wildlife, and ensure contractors are monitored.
- Forestry training covers the diverse range of forestry practices and is made available to landowners and forestry agents.
- There is support for urban and peri-urban tree planting, and for community orchard establishment and restoration.
- Laws protecting hedges and hedgerow trees are strengthened and simplified. Hedgerows are historically important in our landscape. Existing laws aren't currently protecting hedgerows from neglect and poor care. Support should go to farmers and landowners for traditional hedge-laying and hedgerow protection.
- Grant aid is made available for field trees and small copses. Trees along railway lines, motorways, roads and power lines are all regularly felled or poisoned. These trees could be sustainably managed for wood fuel, to provide noise abatement and clean air shelter belts.
- The English government needs to provide the Forestry Commission with the funding needed to enforce Forestry Management Plans (FMPs) and expand the remit of FMPs, so that they also address social and ecological objectives.

THE AGROFORESTRY RESEARCH TRUST GROWS OVER 500 SPECIES OF EDIBLE PLANTS AND TREES ON ITS 20 ACRE SITE IN DEVON. THESE PROVIDE TIMBER, WOOD FUEL, SEEDS, FOOD CROPS, PLANTS AND SAPLINGS.

# What is Agroforestry?

Picture a traditional, idyllic orchard, with a flock of sheep grazing underneath. That is agroforestry. Picture a very modern field of wheat, with widely spaced alleys of hazel nut trees growing in lines, to provide nuts, bind the soil and provide shelter from the weather. That is agroforestry. Picture a forest of English oaks and bluebells, but with new plantings of cherry and walnut trees around the edges; increasing tree cover but with more productive crops. That is agroforestry.

Agroforestry is a term covering a multitude of farming systems with one thing in common. They incorporate trees. Put most simply, it means: 'farming with trees'. Trees have always been part of the British landscape, but in recent decades a division has developed between agriculture and forestry. This separation mirrors the way arable and livestock farming have also recently diverged; but with this divergence have come numerous problems. Production volumes have increased but so have pollution levels and the need for inputs, alongside a loss of biodiversity.

Agroforestry is land use that combines aspects of both agriculture and forestry. A full spectrum of agroforestry solutions can contribute to rural livelihoods and sustain multifunctional landscapes. Agroforestry wants to see trees back at the heart of UK land use.

# Benefits of Agroforestry

**Climate-** Trees offer a safe, nature friendly and relatively cheap way to soak up the carbon that we urgently need to sequester, in order to meet our legal climate obligations. Rates of sequestration vary widely over age and type of tree cover, but trees store carbon in both their timber and in the soil. There is no natural solution to excess carbon in the atmosphere that is so easily achievable and has so many applications, opportunities and complimentary benefits.

**Economic Production-** Trees can offer their own huge range of produce in fruit, nuts, timber, or medicinal products. Farmers are often told to diversify, but often this means tourism or non-farming activities. Tree crops offer great potential to provide resilient income streams and food and timber that is currently imported. They can also help the productivity of adjacent crops and stock. By providing protection from the weather and homes to pollinators and pest predators, they can easily outweigh any lost land area of production. By growing at different times of the year, and in different spaces they allow land to be used for multiple purposes, increasing its overall output, despite the space the trees may take up.

**Water Management-** Trees bind the soil with their roots to improve infiltration and slow water flow. Slowing water flow has clear benefits for flood management and alleviation, as well as helping adjacent crops. The same principle means they reduce soil erosion, and loss of soil fertility has been catastrophic in some areas in the last 30 years. In some situations, they can also help clean up polluted water, and ground, both in their own chemical processes and helping foster micro habitats of other beneficial plants.

**Human wellbeing-** Numerous studies now show the benefits for people's mental health when they spend time in nature. Trees and woodlands are particularly rewarding and offer wildlife, calmness, even spiritual connection. They also offer various educational opportunities for children and families, and again, mixed, mosaic landscapes have been shown to be the most favourable.

**Biodiversity and the nature crisis/nature enhancement-** Creating a mixed 'mosaic' landscape is good for a wide range of species. Using various tree species in a good design can increase cover, food and habitat for all sorts of birds, insects and larger animals too. Tree roots can delve deep into the soil to find nutrients, which then mitigate against increased inputs and fertilisers. Fallen leaves create soil, alongside the chemical and fungal reactions at root level. And where a more natural ecology can provide feed for poultry or stock, it reduces the need to import grains and nutrients from areas of global sensitivity or deforestation. This is important because change of land use is a key international driver of the climate crisis and species loss.

**Animal welfare-** Traditional parkland is a classic use of trees in a grazed landscape in the UK. More shade and tree fodder crops mean healthier animals, more live weight gain, less heat stress and temperature extremes, and often more natural animal behaviour.

## What is Continuous Cover Forestry?

The main aim of Continuous Cover Forestry (CCF) is to transform forest plantations to structurally and biologically diverse woodlands, in which quality timber is produced while avoiding clear-felling. The Forestry Commission has worked hard to promote a system of CCF in many of their woodlands. CCF results in much reduced soil erosion, desiccation, and compaction as there is no major clear felling; increment is removed in cyclical interventions. This approach tends to produce a higher proportion of quality timber and a lower quantity of low value thinnings.

Agroforestry management shares the aim with CCF of creating both biodiverse and productive woodlands and agroforestry woodlands are also under continuous cover, but agroforestry combines food crops with trees. Agroforestry has been found to have multiple environmental benefits and to be more biologically productive and more profitable than forestry or agricultural monocultures.

An example of a CCF woodland is Wilderness Woods, a 25ha private woodland in East Sussex. It consists of Chestnut coppice with stands of beech, scots pine, Douglas fir, cedar and giant sequoia. The family owners use the woodland both for timber, Christmas tree and woodfuel production and as a venue for visitors. Stands originally comprised stored sweet-chestnut coppice, combined with mixed plantings of beech and Scots pine from the late 1950s reforestation efforts, thinned in the late 1970's. Small group selection fellings were replanted with several species, which have included Douglas fir, western red cedar and hardwoods for timber/ woodfuel and Norway spruce for Christmas trees.

KATE MOBBS-MORGAN OF ROWAN WORKING HORSES USES HORSES TO MANAGE WOODLAND AND EXTRACT TIMBER FROM WOODLANDS IN MONMOUTHSHIRE, SOUTH WALES. SHE WORKS FOR A REAL MIX OF CLIENTS FROM SMALL WOODLAND OWNERS THROUGH TO THE MORE COMMERCIALLY GEARED LARGE WOODLAND ESTATES.MODERN HORSE LOGGING TECHNIQUES CAN EFFICIENTLY EXTRACT TIMBER FROM OFTEN DIFFICULT AND SENSITIVE SITES, LEAVING MINIMAL GROUND DAMAGE AND USING A TRULY RENEWABLE LOW CARBON EXTRACTION METHOD

# Silvopasture

Silvopasture systems comprise trees introduced into a forage production system (or, rarely, forage introduced into a tree production system), the whole designed to produce a high-value tree component, while continuing to produce the forage and livestock component indefinitely or for a significant time.

The forage system is usually permanent pasture, grazed rotationally. Other options are pasture cut for hay or silage. The trees may be timber or fuelwood trees, or a fruit or nut crop. Nitrogen-fixing trees can also be used to supply nitrogen for the forage crop. Trees are grown as standards or as pollards. Fruit crops such as apples and plums as the tree component are usually grown as standards to allow for grazing beneath.

Trees provide shade and wind protection, which reduce heat stress and wind-chill of livestock; performance is improved and mortality reduced. Economic returns from forage/livestock production continue while creating a sustainable system with environmental benefits. The combined tree plus forage productivity of silvopastures can substantially exceed that of pastures or forests grown alone.

An example of a newly established silvopasture system is the Pontbren Project 2 in mid-Wales. A group of neighbouring farmers collectively managing 1,000 ha of improved upland grassland introduced trees into their livestock farms. The tree planting has allowed the group of farmers to substitute bought-in materials, such as animal bedding, with wood products from their land; provides shelter for livestock; has increased habitat and species diversity, including endangered species; and has significantly reduced water run-off during heavy rain. The reduction in water run-off led to a major hydrological research project which has provided new evidence on the role of trees in flood control. Ten years into the project, the Pontbren land was 5% new woodland (50 ha) with no loss of agricultural productivity. It is said that critical to the project's success was external funding from a number of sources including LEADER, the Lottery and the Rural Care Scheme. Existing agri-environment and woodland grant schemes aren't currently sufficiently flexible to provide such support, to targeted, site-specific, collaborative initiatives such as this.

WELSH FARMERS AT PONTBREN PROJECT IN MID-WALES INCREASED THE WOODLAND COVER IN THEIR UPLAND SHEEP FARMS BY 5% WHILE IMPROVING THEIR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY AND SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCING FLOOD RISK IN THE CATCHMENT. IT WOULDN'T HAVE HAPPENED WITHOUT EXTERNAL FUNDING.

SMILING TREE FARM IS A 70 ACRE PASTORAL FARM IN WALES THAT FOCUSES ON REGENERATING SOIL HEALTH THROUGH THE USE OF MOB-GRAZED RUMINANTS RAISED EXCLUSIVELY ON DIVERSE PERMANENT PASTURES, WILDFLOWER MEADOWS, SPECIAL FIELDS OF HERBS, AND BROWSING TREES MANAGED AS A SILVOCULTURE SYSTEM.

# Pests and Disease

**Climate change, and new and larger numbers of pests are contributing to increased shocks and stresses to trees, forests and woodlands. Research needs to be carried out into pests and disease, and measures adopted to protect trees.**

National government should ensure that:

- Funding is made available for research into pests and diseases currently affecting trees and forests. We need to be preparing for forest resilience into an uncertain future.
- Policy and grants support small-scale tree nurseries specialising in locally sourced and propagated tree species. Many tree nurseries have closed as a result of cheap imports from outside the UK. Additional support could encourage such nurseries to become hubs for propagating locally adapted tree species, for local conservation initiatives and climate resilience.

ASH DIE BACK: ACCELERATING INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND CLIMATE CHANGE MAKE PATHOGEN SPREAD AN INCREASING CONCERN.

# Domestic Self-Sufficiency

**The UK currently imports 80% of the timber it consumes. The UK must move toward self-sufficiency in timber and woodland products and in the training of woodland professionals. A reinvigorated forest industry would co-create new and revitalized local economies and prepare for the demands of a low carbon economy.**

Government, at all levels and in all regions should ensure that:

- Our timber consumption needs are analysed, and this analysis shapes policy, grants, etc. towards greater self-sufficiency.
- Policy and grants direct investment to new softwood plantings of useful timber species. This would provide valuable shorter-term timber crop rotations. Together with on-site milling, timber grading and conversion such an increase in softwood plantings could substantially supplement imported timber.
- Subsidies are introduced to support the growing and sale of high-quality British hardwoods and timber products.
- Broadleaf and coppice woodlands can be commercially viable, by supporting the development of broadleaf silviculture, and creating robust supply chains for hardwoods and associated products. Pillar 2-equivalent subsidies should continue to support activities that improve the productivity and management of woodlands such as the funding of forestry tracks and deer fencing.
- Policy supports a thriving, expanding coppice industry, and existing coppice skills are passed onto the next generation. The UK has a great tradition of coppice management providing charcoal, woodfuel, building timber and ancillary products for rural crafts and trades. The LWA supports increasing the proportion of woodland and coppice cover in the UK. However, it is vital that all new woodlands have productivity as a key aim in their creation and subsequent management. By keeping economic viability central, alongside environmental benefits, we increase the likelihood that these woodlands will be sustainable in the absence of external funding.
- An escalating rise in tariffs on imported timber from areas of deforestation, or endangered habitat, is introduced immediately. This would include proper checks on imported wood and lead to a total ban on unsustainable forms of imported timber.
- Tariffs and regulation support UK production and ensure the gradual reduction of imports of uncertified timber. This would improve control over provenance and sustainability, and could be used in part to provide financial incentives for high quality domestic woodland management.

# Case Study - West Riding Coppice, Malvern Hills

Planning permission for accommodation enables careful woodland management

Nick Birchley of West Riding Coppice bought 25 acres of ancient and semi-natural woodland in Malvern Hills in 2010. From his woodland holding he produces coppiced timber, firewood, and charcoal for sale, and through the adoption of Continuous Cover Forestry practice, has improved the wood's biodiversity and ecosystem services.

In 2012, he applied for two yurts for his and partner's housing and was granted temporary consent. When he applied two years later for a permanent consent for the two yurts, the Local Planning Authority said no on the grounds that, in their view, there was no essential need for a worker to live on site, and that the business wasn't viable. Nick had always been able to cover his living costs from income generated from the land, and had no debt. Nonetheless, he was told he could not live there at an appeal in 2016.

Nick got a second chance when he appealed against the enforcement notice and times had changed. The inspector at Nick's second appeal noted that the Local Planning Authority had recently declared a climate emergency. He recognised that Nick could not deliver the environmental benefits resulting from his "careful method of woodland management" if he had to pay rent for local housing. The inspector found that the cost of rent for local housing would make the enterprise unviable and granted Nick another temporary permission, this time for a caravan. Nick is able to continue living on the land he works, but had to remove the two yurts and he must make another application for permanent consent in 2022.


DORSET SPOON CLUB IS A WEEKEND ACTIVITY HELD AT CRAFTY CAMPING - A WOODLAND TOURISM ENTERPRISE IN WEST DORSET. THE CLUB PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY FOR LOCAL PEOPLE TO LEARN ABOUT WOODLAND CRAFTS AND BE IN NATURE. THE WOODLAND GLAMPING BUSINESS CONTRIBUTES TO THE FINANCIAL VIABILITY OF THE WOODLAND

# An Education for All in Woodlands and Trees

**Many people are unaware of the resources and products our woodlands and forests provide, and though independent woodland education such as 'forest schools' are on the rise, for school leavers there is little access to the forestry industry, woodland management or in the care of trees.**

Government at all levels should seek to provide:

- Greater financial support to those institutes teaching sustainable forestry and alternatives to forest monocultures.
- Funding for forestry and woodland management education, from apprenticeships right through further education. Grants should be available to low income students.
- Forestry, woodwork classes, arboriculture and sustainable land management at all levels of the National Curriculum.
- A link between every school and an active forest, woodland or orchard operation, to include school visits.
- Resources to increase teachers' awareness of available teaching resources on forestry and to develop more diverse educational resources.
- That training is led by working land managers wherever possible, through peer-to-peer networks, rather than remote educational establishments.
- Grant support for continued professional development of existing workers in the sector to ensure it thrives as an industry.
- Specific policies and bursary schemes to diversify the workforce and provide new opportunities for all sectors of society to engage with woodlands and forestry. The forestry sector has a gender and ethnicity bias, with very little few women and people of colour in the sector. Grants, training and opportunities to access land should be designated for women and BIPOC forestry workers.

FOREST SCHOOLS ARE ON THE RISE, BUT FOR THOSE INSPIRED TO ENTER THE FORESTRY SECTOR THERE'S LITTLE ACCESS TO THE FORESTRY INDUSTRY. THERE SHOULD BE PROGRAMMES TO MAKE FOREST SCHOOLS, TRAINING AND APPRENTICESHIPS ACCESSIBLE TO ALL.

HILL HOLT WOODS IS A SOCIAL ENTERPRISE IN WALES THAT FOCUSES ON REGENERATING SOIL HEALTH THROUGH THE USE OF MOB-GRAZED RUMINANTS RAISED EXCLUSIVELY ON DIVERSE PERMANENT PASTURES, WILDFLOWER MEADOWS, SPECIAL FIELDS OF HERBS, AND BROWSING TREES MANAGED AS A SILVOCULTURE SYSTEM.

# Case Study - Hazel Hill Trust, Wiltshire

Charitable trust manages woodland for wildlife and well-being

Hazel Hill Wood is a 70-acre ancient woodland site and designated Local Wildlife Site. It's managed by a charitable trust as a conservation woodland. It has a high diversity of wildflowers, trees and fungi, providing a variety of landscapes and habitats. Hazel Hill Wood is home to many bird species, three types of deer, and some rare butterflies: the pearl-bordered fritillary and argent sable moth in particular.

To provide undisturbed wildlife habitats, the trust has designated around 12 acres of the wood as nature sanctuary areas. The trust has an annual forestry and conservation plan which includes strategic thinning. The ongoing conservation work is largely carried out by volunteers. There are conservation days throughout the year aimed at the local community, and in particular vulnerable groups.

The trust has also been running a programme of school visits, retreats, tours, and workshops and attracts just under 1,000 visitors a year. Partner organisations include Wisdom Tree, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust and 'Kids at the Wood' whose activities are largely aimed at those either coping with mental illness or in high stress jobs in the caring professions.

Income to maintain the woods is generated through the sale of biomass, grants and through providing the woods as a venue. However, the lottery funding which helped fund the retreats, for front-line NHS and hospice staff, has now ended. Grants accounted for over 50% of income in the most recently reported year and yet only raised a net amount of £14,000 after the cost of staff raising funds is accounted for. The sale of wood for biomass represents a fraction of the charity's income.

These woods have been able to provide social and environmental benefits due to the generosity of a single individual who gifted the woods and buildings to the trust, and who continues to make large one-off donations. This level of private contribution can rarely be replicated. Government funding would have a highly significant positive impact on the success and impacts of woodlands managed for biodiversity, public access and community benefit.

Under Hazel Hill Wood's planning permission, educational use of the wood is limited: educational revenue covers the running costs of the facilities, but has not covered the funding needs of conservation, capital repairs/improvements, or forestry costs which, according to the charity, well exceed revenue in most years. These woods, like many others, would benefit from planning policies which allowed planning consent where it helped woodland managers better deliver environmental, economic and social benefits.

# Our Forest Economy

**There is growing interest in forest livelihoods and in forest products and services, but planning policies are a barrier to on-site housing and on-site processing, as well as to the use of woodlands for conservation and recreation. Planning policies must change to support sustainable forest livelihoods and viable woodlands.**

**A strong forest economy needs fiscal support from government, including for new entrants and business incubators. It requires a policy environment which prioritises increasing self-sufficiency in timber, skilled labour over automation, and recognises the needs of woodland workers.**

Government should at all levels and in all regions, ensure that:

- New entrants to forestry are supported with a relevant programme of business grants and advice. For people with proven ability and access to woods, grants of up to £100,000 for start-up costs should be made available.
- UK forest policy, grants and planting programmes clearly set out to increase replanting to meet domestic demand for quality softwoods, hardwoods and board products. For hardwoods, the grants for planting must be for commercial spacing where possible in order to provide for thinning and future quality timber.
- Policy and grants favour local suppliers of forestry contracting and timber processing. Whilst much of the National Forest Estate is under different forms of active management, the work is largely carried out by large contracting companies with little room in the tendering model for smaller local operators.
- Funding is made available for a network of new local timber hubs or 'tree-stations' to link consumers and forest producers. These could market firewood, building timber, wood chip, coppice products, etc. They could be integrated into the food economy by producing compost and mushrooms.
- Forestry grants are focused on getting small and neglected woodlands back into productive use using local skilled labour.

- Support is given to both consumers and suppliers to ensure that seasoned, locally produced wood is affordable, available and compliant with air quality standards. Local woods can and should supply an increasing proportion of fuel for domestic heating.
- Support, advice, and grants lead to a substantial increase in the number of people employed overall in forestry, rather than encouraging automation and de-skilling.
- Small-scale local forestry enterprises are supported to take on long-term contracts on public and private forest estates, creating consistent income and an intimate knowledge of sites.
- New plantings usually include a component of useful and high value timber crops, including non-natives (e.g. Western Red Cedar, Douglas Fir, Black Locust), rather than only native deciduous mixes.
- Legislation requires landlords to provide adequate security of tenure for woodland businesses. Establishing the infrastructure needed for land-based businesses is a very long process and needs security of tenure.
- Planning policy and guidance allows low-impact, primary processing of timber products within woodlands and the erection of barns to enable these activities.
- Planning policy is adapted to encourage sustainable woodland practice. This needs to include the recognition of the need for on-site accommodation. Planning policy must be fully supportive of new forest worker housing where there is a proven ecological benefit to the woods / landscape. The planning conditions should include an occupancy condition restricting the permission to those working full-time in woodlands and their dependants.
- A new planning framework for landworkers is introduced, where an initial temporary permission is granted easily, but where full planning permission is granted when the enterprise is proven to be financially and environmentally sustainable.
- Forestry tied housing is reinstated, making it harder to remove land workers from the land and then profit from property sales or market rent.

# Case Study - Woodmanship, Devon

Woodland management business generates employment and timber.

Woodmanship is a small multi-purpose company managing woodlands, harvesting and processing timber from its base in Devon. The business manages local woodlands for their owners on a very sustainable continuous cover system which allows for a diverse mix of trees species and ages, and which has attracted rare insects, butterflies and birds across their sites.

The processed wood is sold for construction timber, joinery timbers, cladding and seasoned floorboards. Woodmanship sells its by-products locally: waste sawdust for animal bedding; slabwood offcuts to a local biomass plant; and hardwood waste for wood-burning stoves. It employs three staff to operate the sawmill, two part time carpenters, a machine operator and groundsman and three part time tree surgeons/ fallers. This creates direct employment for 7 full time equivalent staff.

Being based in a well wooded area having developed good relationships with local woodland owners and woodland managers and with a very good knowledge of what is growing where, the business is able to harvest specific trees for specific jobs on short demand times, as and when the customer demands it. The business harvests timber from local woodlands it manages as well as buying in lorry loads of timber from other harvesting companies in Devon. 99.5% of the timber harvested is harvested in Devon and 98% of the product sold is sold in Devon. Approximately 1500 m3 of timber and fuelwood are processed each year.

Woodmanship would not have been able to evolve into its present scale if owner Mike Gardner had not been able to build a home and timber processing facilities on agricultural land. This was a key factor in allowing the business to become viable, allowing rental and business borrowing to be manageable. Local accommodation for the staff is houses are inhabited by professional high wage earners commuting to Exeter or remote working from home and are too expensive for forestry workers. Staff have to commute or live in mobile homes on local sites. Mike would like to expand the business but there no available land on which additional workshops or timber storage could be built. There are no more agriculture sheds in the neighbourhood to rent for timber storage as they are either full of cows and hay or have been developed into barn shaped houses under class Q planning permissions.

Sawmills' experience touches on many of the issues within this manifesto: we are just 20% self-sufficient in timber and need policies and grants that support the growing and sale of British hardwoods and timber products. This includes planning policies which ensure that there are the work and living spaces needed by rural businesses and workers, and which allow woodland workers to live in their woodlands. It also includes the need for there to be a Land Reform Commission to evaluate whether monopoly land ownership hampers local initiatives and businesses and asks how communities can better access, own and manage their local resources.

# Woodlands and Trees for All

**Access to forests and use of woodland has numerous social and health benefits. All UK citizens, regardless of class, gender, ethnicity and age, need to be able to access woodlands for a diverse range of employment and other needs without financial, physical, or other barriers. People of colour and minority ethnic communities as well as low-income families in urban areas have fewer opportunities to access to nature and green spaces.**

Government, at all levels and in all regions, should ensure that:

- There is financial support for programmes to establish community woodlands in or with clear connections to communities in urban areas, forest school and nature programmes accessible to low income households, woodlands on the outskirts of cities with extensive free footpaths near public transportation.
- Learning from Scotland, the right to roam is extended to all UK woodlands, with exceptions for work in progress and proximity to private homes, and taking due care of plants, trees and wildlife.
- There are targets to ensure a significant increase in community buy-outs of local woodlands where the community can evidence their ability to manage the woodlands. This would include the introduction of new legislation providing communities first refusal to buy woodland, and financial support in the form of low or no-cost loans from a government land fund. The land fund could be funded by payments from carbon taxes.
- Learning from the best practice community woodlands, a programme of voluntary work in forests and tree planting is rolled out, with accessibility and well-being for everyone as a key objective.
- The Land Registry is protected from privatisation, made free to access, and extended to cover 100% of the UK land area. Any grants or public funding should be made conditional on the land holding being registered. Pension schemes and family trusts in possession of large tracts of forest often do not appear on the Land Registry. Grants, taxation and access favour those privileged with ownership, and much of the details of these benefits are unavailable to public scrutiny.
- A Land Reform Commission is set up to evaluate whether monopoly land ownership hampers local initiatives and businesses. It should examine the use of tax breaks and off-shore land ownership, and ask how communities could better access, own and control their local resources.
- Tax policy is re-engineered so that companies managing woods with high ecological benefits and high worker-to-land area ratio, are encouraged.
- Grants are tapered, which would mean smaller woodlands with high social and environmental returns could still receive significant grants despite their small size, and larger land holdings would have their grants capped.
- Support is provided to communities to restore orchards and establish new ones. England has lost more than two thirds of its orchards since 1950. Yet in traditional tall-tree orchards nature and humans have together created a treasury of genetic diversity, beautiful landscapes and a repository of culture. Nearly 3,000 varieties of eating, cooking and cider apples have been grown in the UK, many originating from particular places.

In England, the Forestry Commission should be resourced to increase its management of state woods. Staff should be offered relevant training to understand ecological and social outputs.

# Case study - Leeds Coppice Workers

Community supported forestry builds social capital while managing coppice

Leeds Coppice Workers (LCW) is a social enterprise and not-for-profit which restores coppices and manages woodlands on behalf of multiple landowners in the Leeds area. The social enterprise carries out coppice restoration work for free, and makes a living by selling bean poles, pea sticks, firewood and charcoal that are by-products of their work. Their work ensures that neglected coppices do not rot away, and helps create better spaces for their surrounding community by managing neglected and underused local woods.

Once restoration work begins on a neglected coppice, it takes about eight years for the coppice to be back 'in rotation'; producing sufficient quantities of higher value saleable rods. Only once the woods are back in rotation and have reasonable stocking density of coppice, is it possible to make the work pay.

In the absence of grants, restoring coppice can only be viable when there's both low or no-interest finance to cover costs of the restoration, mainly staff time, and where there's a commitment from the landlord to allow coppice workers to return after eight years. LCW was in the unique position of being able to obtain 0% loans from its members, and has also been able to establish positive long-term relationships with landowners including Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, Leeds City Council, East Keswick Wildlife Trust, and Yorkshire Community Woodland Society. LCW has also created diverse income streams such as contract woodland management work and outdoor education to offset losses made from initial coppice restoration.

There is significant potential for more coppice restoration across the country. Grants or no-cost finance which directly support coppice restoration would allow others without access to affordable finance to develop the same model as LCW and restore coppice in their areas. LCW is a co-operative with ongoing community involvement and as such the long-term commitment needed for the management of coppices isn't loaded on one individual landworker or landlord. Government could helpfully promote and support co-operatives and community organisations to provide coppice restoration and management.

# Conclusion

The preceding pages have laid out the benefits of more trees in our landscapes and the case for an ambitious and coherent strategy on woodland care and revival.

Many of these policy changes will require upfront investment, but we are sure that major financial benefits will be reaped over time. Trees require long term thinking.

Moreover, the government response to the Covid virus has proved that when something urgently needs doing, the government has very deep pockets, and we make the case here that there is indeed such an urgent need in the UK landscape today.

We look forward to communities, forestry workers, government and tree-lovers of all kinds, working together to create the momentum to see this transition happen.

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The Landworkers' Alliance (LWA) is a grassroots union forestry workers and farmers across the UK. We campaign for the rights of producers and lobby the UK government for policies that support the infrastructure and economic climate central to our livelihoods.

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